

How did I end up in Epstein's little black book?

Toby Young

Every time Jeffrey Epstein is in the news, I start getting calls from strangers wanting to scream abuse at me. This happened a lot when the billionaire financier was found dead in his jail cell last year after being arrested on sex trafficking charges, and it has started again following the arrest of his ex-girlfriend Ghislaine Maxwell a couple of weeks ago. The reason is that my contact details were in Epstein's 'little black book', and whenever his name pops up some kindly soul takes it upon themselves to post a picture of the relevant page, which shows my mobile phone number, on Twitter. I may have to change my number, so frequent have the calls become.

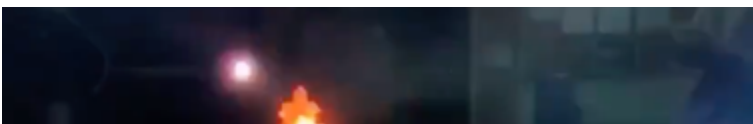
On one level, it's quite flattering. In a piece about the book last year, the *New York Times* described it as 'a symbol of the exclusive world of the very famous and very rich'. And it does read like the modern-day equivalent of 'the four hundred', the crème-de-la-crème of international society compiled by the social arbiter Ward McAllister and printed in the *New York Times* in 1892. Among the names in the 'little black book' are Donald Trump, Bill Clinton, Prince Andrew, Mick Jagger, Ted Kennedy, Alan Dershowitz, Courtney Love, Peter Mandelson and Ralph Fiennes. My details appear opposite those of 'Yugoslavia, Prince Michael of'.

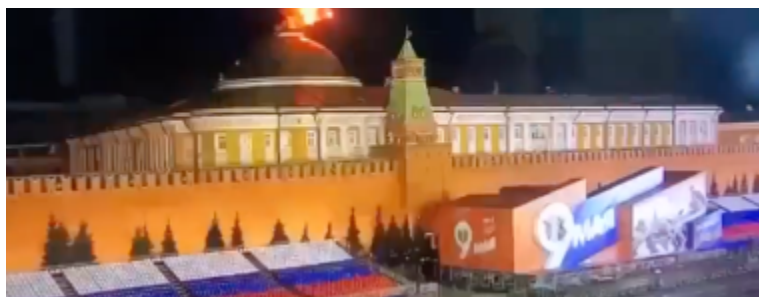
(If Ghislaine had offered me a lift on Epstein's private jet in the mid-1990s, I would have accepted

I can honestly say, hand on heart, I've no idea how I ended up in Epstein's address book. I never met him and never set foot in any of his houses, let alone on his private island. Not that anyone believes me when I say this. Ever since the contents of the book were published on a gossip website in 2015, the people in it have been frantically protesting their innocence. Charles Finch, the film producer, told the *New York Times* he had no idea why his name was there, as did Vanessa von Bismarck, the founder of a PR company. Joan Juliet Buck, the former editor of French *Vogue*, said: 'As far as I know, I never met Epstein. I never went to any of those famous parties at the biggest house in New York City.' To the conspiracy theorists piecing together the web-like connections between the *dramatis personae*, these denials might as well be admissions of guilt.

Most popular

What's the truth about the Kremlin drone attack?





My best guess is that, in reality, the address book belonged to Ghislaine, whom I do know slightly. When I lived in New York between 1995 and 2000, I bumped into her occasionally at parties and the London address listed as mine dates back to that period. (I sometimes worry about a mob of enraged paedo-hunters turning up outside my old Shepherd's Bush bedsit and demanding justice.) Rather unhelpfully, the *Daily Mail* recently ran a picture spread showing Ghislaine out and about 'in society' and including a photo of me saying something funny to her in a nightclub, making her howl with laughter. Ever since, that picture has been posted dozens of times on Twitter, alongside the relevant page in the 'little black book', as if it were proof that I was a member of Epstein's inner circle. It's guilt by association, although as I point out to the screamers on the other end of the phone, Ghislaine hasn't actually been found guilty of anything. Needless to say, the concept of 'innocent until proven guilty' doesn't cut much ice with them.

The 'little black book' first surfaced in 2012 when Alfredo Rodriguez, Epstein's former housekeeper, was arrested by the FBI while trying to sell it for \$50,000. Somehow, it fell into the hands of an investigative journalist called Nick Bryant, as did the passenger logs of Epstein's private jet, nicknamed the 'Lolita Express', and he published them both three years later on Gawker, a now defunct gossip website. Happily, my name isn't on the manifest of the Lolita Express, although the company there is even more exalted than in the address book. In addition to Bill Clinton, Prince Andrew and Alan Dershowitz, the names include Naomi Campbell, Chris Tucker and Kevin Spacey. Had Ghislaine offered me a lift to London on it back in the mid-1990s, before Epstein was suspected of any crimes, I would have accepted. Thank God for small mercies.

I sometimes wonder why none of the other people in the 'little black book' have had their personal details shared on Twitter — there's at least one other ex-Labour MP in there, in addition to Blair and Mandy. I daresay it's because I'm a Tory. In the eyes of the basement-dwelling left, we're all suspected paedos.